



The Weight Is Worth It

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Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” Matthew 16:24

What is the heaviest thing you have ever carried? Was it a gallon of milk because you insisted on pouring it yourself into your cereal? Was it your backpack as you got older and started getting more homework? Was it dumbbells as you started training for a sport? Let me ask one more question: Was it worth it? No matter what the object was, was there a good reason to carry something so heavy?

Jesus tells us that following him sometimes means carrying something heavy—and that following him is always worth it. He calls that heavy burden a “cross.”

When we think of Jesus and a cross, we probably think of how he died on a cross on Good Friday. And we should! In fact, Jesus wanted his disciples to think about that, too. He predicted his death when he said in our reading that he needed to go to Jerusalem to “suffer many things” and to “be killed.” One of the things Jesus suffered on Good Friday was carrying his own cross to Mount Calvary.

But Jesus knew that all of his suffering would be worth it. He knew that “on the third day” he would “be raised to life.” On Easter Sunday, he rose from the dead, and he still lives! Because Jesus suffered and died in your place, your sins are forgiven. Because he rose, you will live forever with him. Even when you face death, your heart can be at peace. Jesus willingly carried his cross because he loves you and wanted to save you.

And now Jesus tells us to take up our crosses and follow him. You can’t weigh these crosses like a gallon of milk, a backpack, or dumbbells. But they can still feel heavy. That’s because a Christian’s cross is something painful or difficult that comes from following Jesus. Sometimes it’s the struggle to say no to sin. Sometimes it’s being made fun of because of our faith. Sometimes it’s feeling like you’re missing out because other people are doing something that God says is wrong.

Carrying a cross does not earn us a place in heaven. Jesus already did everything necessary to save us. But because Jesus saved us, we follow him—even when following him is hard. And we never carry our crosses alone. The same Jesus who carried his cross for us walks beside us, strengthens us, and promises to bring us safely home.

Some burdens feel heavy. But Jesus is worth following. He carried the weight that saved us, and he will help us carry every cross along the way. The weight is worth it because Jesus is worth it.

Questions to Consider

- What are some things that are heavy to carry?
- Jesus carried his cross because he loves you. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus loves you that much?
- What is a “cross” that someone your age might carry because he or she follows Jesus?
- What can you remember about Jesus when following him feels difficult?
- Why didn’t Peter want Jesus to suffer and die? Why was Jesus’ cross necessary for our salvation?
- Jesus asked, “What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?” What might someone your age be tempted to gain by turning away from Jesus—and why would it never be worth the cost?